

Mission Opportunities

A newsletter of resources, events, and ideas to help God's people passionately, intentionally, and faithfully extend the Gospel within our communities, throughout the District, and into all the world!

January 2010



Happy New Year! How many times will it happen? How often will we write 2009 on a check, in an article or in an e-mail before we get used to writing 2010? That's just one more example of how difficult change is. There's no denial that our culture is changing. No longer is the Church part of the center, but we have been moved to the margins. That means it's even more important to see the mission field across the street, next door, and around the neighborhood in our community! I encourage you to spend more time in your meetings, sermons, Bible classes, articles, and conversations discussing with your members possible ways for being a "mission outpost" in your community!

Visioning – What can the future look like in our congregation and community as a result of our ministry and how can we help that to happen? If we don't know where we're going, any road will get us there but it's helpful and important to have a "map" to follow to the destination point for our ministry. The Bible, of course, gives us the picture of the final destination, but what are the details for our community and congregation? Pray, discuss, study, and brainstorm with your people to help develop a ministry plan for your congregation. Consider inviting one or both of the district executives to assist with the process. Mt. Calvary, Indianola; Redeemer, Sioux City; 1st English, Spencer; and Christ Our Savior, Norwalk are some of the congregations that have or are planning to have us help them lay out the direction and plans for their ministry. Visit with their leaders and consider giving Bob Riggert or myself a call!

Funding – Did you know that the District sets aside funds (Ablaze grants) every year to assist congregations in their outreach ministry? A letter and application form will be arriving shortly but start thinking now about the possibilities for outreach in your community. Grants, up to \$5,000, are available with priority given to those ministries that target the unchurched or unbeliever, provide the greatest opportunity for occurrence of "critical events" (a Lutheran Christian sharing the hope that is in him or her so that another may encounter Christ), and are part of a sustainable ministry.



Outreach Workshops – Not just the angels and shepherds get to proclaim the good news of great joy, but all of God's people do! The Personal Missions Committee has planned a series of half-day workshops to equip and encourage us in that mission. The workshops, including breakfast (Saturday) or evening snack (Sunday) will be held at Faith, Council Bluffs (Feb. 6); Gloria Dei, Urbandale (Feb. 13); Prince of Peace, Fort Dodge (Feb. 20); and First English, Spencer (Feb. 21). A mailing with more information is on its way!

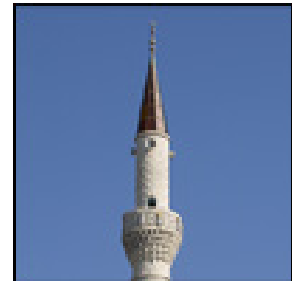
Outreach through servant events! – Request your free copy of the Servant Events DVD resource by going to the District and Congregational Services online store at www.lcms.org/ca/dcs/dcsstore or contacting me. In addition to providing important information about attending or hosting an event, the DVD also includes a six-segment feature that follows the experience of one youth group on an LCMS Servant Event. “From Start to Finish” tells the story of change and growth that happens on a Servant Event through the eyes, voices, and experiences of six youth narrators. The feature comes with online discussion guides—making it a useful tool for groups preparing to attend an event, or for a theme-based Bible study in any youth setting. The DVD also contains a Servant Event theme music video for use in a variety of settings.



Be my witnesses! – See the Fan Into Flame newsletter elsewhere in this mailing for exciting news about the progress of this campaign both Synod-wide and within the District. Invite your congregation to be a part of this Synod-wide movement, as well as raising awareness of the local mission field! 15% of the net gifts from your congregation will come back to you for outreach in your local community through an effort identified by your congregation! Contact me for more information, materials and guidance to prepare for this effort.

Mission festival – Now is the time to be making plans for a mission festival to highlight the work we are doing together, as well as calling your congregation into the mission field within their own community! Consider inviting one of our district-supported missionaries or myself to come and tell the story and help develop a closer relationship with the missionary and his ministry. Go to <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=5249> for resources.

Food for thought – Did you catch the news item about the peaceful, neutrality-loving citizens of Switzerland? They voted last month to ban the construction of minarets in their country, the steeple-like towers attached to mosques from which the call to prayer is broadcast. Supposedly it wasn't an effort seeking to prevent Muslims from practicing their religion, but to prevent the growing political impact of Switzerland's Muslim minority. What about the growing population of Muslims in our country? Are they a threat to traditional American values needing to be kept on the margins? Are they spiritual competition in the marketplace of faith needing to be out-marketed? Are they political and cultural enemies to be outlawed? Or are they our neighbors whom Jesus calls us to love?



Closer partnership with District – Our task is too critical to attempt to accomplish on our own. That's why we have circuits, districts, and a Synod. As always, I stand ready to assist you in any way that I can to equip the people of your congregation to passionately, intentionally, and faithfully impact their community and beyond for the kingdom of God. Why not call me today at 515-570-2331 and let's start praying and planning!

Celebrating the Victory,

Rev. Mark Gerken, Executive Assistant for Missions
Mark.Gerken@idwlcms.org

Sunday School Superintendents and Day School Principals – Each month we will be providing a devotion that you can utilize in your Sunday school opening or weekly chapel service. They will be written by our District missionaries to the Hispanics, Rev. Dan Vogel and Rev. Henry Witte. These devotions are in support of our two-year mission project that we are suggesting for our Sunday schools and day schools, *Amigos en Cristo*.



Rev. Mark Gerken, Executive Assistant for Missions

The Amigos en Cristo campaign is a two-year program with a goal to raise \$20,000 a year to provide scholarships for Hispanic children to attend Lutheran day schools and preschools in Iowa District West.

DISTRICT CHAPEL WORSHIP FOR "AMIGOS EN CRISTO"

Text: Matthew 2:2: "Where is the One who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

Worship Helps: The Baptismal font

Theme: What do we have to look forward to?

For many Hispanic families New Year's Eve is a celebration of Thanksgiving, Christmas, the New Year and Epiphany, all wrapped up in one. You can imagine that it's a special time for children, when they receive gifts from the Wise Men. It's a great way to begin the New Year, with gifts, family, and loved ones together in a big party.



The great gift of course is Jesus, the King whom the Wise Men came to find and worship. The New Year reminds us of new life, especially our new life in Christ Jesus. Last year before the New Year I baptized 3 children, Cinthia, Francisco and Denisse, siblings of the same family. Their mother was from Honduras. She has had many struggles in this country, but God has blessed her, especially with faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus. She wanted to baptize and teach her children this faith in Jesus. What a future those special children have to look forward to!

What a reason to thank our Lord and Savior Jesus as we enter a new year! What a reason to celebrate! Through our baptism in Jesus we have so much to look forward to: new life in the Christ Child who is our Lord and who led the Wise men and all the world to the true salvation. Baby Jesus became a carpenter of his little town of Nazareth. But His future was much more important. He was the Savior of the world. With the Wise Men we worship Him because by His perfect life and ministry, by His death and resurrection He paid for our sins and earned our salvation which leads to eternal life.

He is our King, not of a country here on earth, but King of the Kingdom of God, wherever believers of every country are to be found. And He is the King of heaven as He prepares a heavenly home for all believers. All people need that same salvation of hope, no matter what country they may live in or what language they speak. God bless and keep you in this special New Year in Christ!



Sharing the Love of Jesus

Outreach Workshops - February 2010

Just before His ascension, Jesus instructed His followers to make disciples of all nations, and the Apostle Peter instructs us to "always be prepared to give an answer for the hope that is within you. But how is that done? How do we carry out this task in our own context?"

An opportunity is coming to explore these questions at any of four Outreach Workshops coming up in February around Iowa District West:

Saturday, February 6, 2010, 8-11:30 a.m.
Faith, Council Bluffs

Saturday, February 13, 2010, 8-11:30 a.m.
Gloria Dei, Urbandale

Saturday, February 20, 2010, 8-11:30 a.m.
Prince of Peace, Fort Dodge

Sunday, February 21, 2010, 3-6:30 p.m.
First English, Spencer



These workshops will include resources to help you tell other people about Jesus. The workshops will include various discussion groups on more specific scenarios, such as introducing relatives to Jesus, visiting the unchurched, reaching out to people of other cultures, and more. Mark your calendars now, and look for a mailing coming to District congregations around the first of the year with complete details and registration information. Also check the next edition of *The Monthly* for more information.

Rev. Jason P. Peterson
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